

**CAUCUS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES**
*Seventh Session of the Conference of the Parties
In the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco
(October 29 – November 9, 2001)*

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

My brothers and sisters of the indigenous peoples and local communities that attend this meeting have asked me to convey to the Seventh Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change our message, our concerns and our requests. We also express our gratitude to the Kingdom of Morocco for their excellent hospitality and to you, Mr. President, for the understanding and kindness that you have shown us.

Indigenous peoples represent approximately 350 million people in the world and we are the direct victims of climate change, since we live in the most fragile ecosystems of the planet. We are profoundly concerned because climate change gravely threatens our territories and cultures.

1

For indigenous peoples, the land is a sacred space that the Creator entrusts to our Peoples, hence our responsibility to care for it. The land is where we and our legends are born and our history created. This is the space that ensures our physical and cultural existence and where we obtain our food and medicines, where we nurture our languages, where we celebrate our ceremonies, where we give birth. In our philosophies, the land also includes all natural and spiritual resources, including the air, the waters, flora and fauna. The land is also the space that we must leave as a legacy for the future generations. We are the land. The land is us.

MR President, ~~excellencies~~ ladies + gentlemen,

The grave damages that climate change has caused include the pollution and the loss of our territories, deterioration and destruction of our forests and our rich and diverse ecosystems. Climate change has worsened desertification. It has polluted or dried up the subterranean and superficial water sources, and caused the extinction of precious flora and fauna and affected the circle of life. The world phenomenon of global warming has caused record thawing of ice and snow cover from the mountains of the south to the arctic regions of the north. In some causes, it has provoked hunger, misery, social conflicts and migrations.

Diverse instruments of international law and current normative processes recognize our collective, particular and specific rights. The interrelation of the philosophy, principles and provisions of international instruments born, during and after the Rio Summit, is self-evident. Furthermore, Distinguished Delegates, our philosophies and cosmovisions require that real and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities be formally established in the UNFCCC, especially in discussions on clean development and flexible mechanisms, carbon market trading and the achievement of sustainable development.

Mr. President and Distinguished Delegates, to address the aforementioned problems, the Convention must grant us an adequate status and space. Consequently, Mr. President, today, in the name of the representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities, we request that the Conference:

- Adopt a decision that grants a special status that contemplates and considers the particular and specific problems related to climate change that affect indigenous peoples and local communities.

- Create an ad hoc intersessional open-ended working group on indigenous peoples and local communities whose objectives must be: to study and propose timely, effective and adequate solutions to respond to the problems caused by climate change; said working group would provide a space for our full and effective participation in the discussions, debates and programs of the Convention and will also be a space to channel our contributions to climate change mitigation and, of course, for exchanging points of view and experiences with the Parties of the Convention.

Finally

Mr. President, the very existence of our peoples, communities and cultures is threatened. On behalf of our peoples and future generations, we request that in this Conference the governments assume their responsibilities with bravery and foresight and adopt concrete and immediate measures favorable for our peoples and communities.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Marrakech, November 8th, 2001.